



# DIOCESE of TYLER

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 31, 2018

My Dear Clergy, Consecrated Religious, and Faithful of the Diocese of Tyler,

Today, I join with the other bishops of Texas in releasing the names of clergy (priests and deacons) in our dioceses who are subject to credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor. Personally, and with my brother bishops, I express my deep sorrow to the survivors of abuse and my commitment to providing pastoral care for each survivor. I apologize for the failings and sins that have hurt the Church so deeply, especially with our most vulnerable members. I especially ask forgiveness for the failings of those who have held positions of leadership in the Church.

I have only one name to release for which a credible allegation exists in the Diocese of Tyler since its creation in 1987. But even that is one too many. The abuse of minors - physical, emotional, and above all, sexual - should NEVER happen in churches, in homes, in schools, or anywhere. All of us are called to holiness and to serve as examples of virtue, but our priests and deacons are to be held to a high standard – and rightly so.

The name I am releasing to you today is that of Gustavo Cuello.

Mr. Cuello is a native of Colombia. He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Guayaquil in Ecuador in 1989. In 1995, he came to the Diocese of Tyler and was assigned to Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Tyler.

In 1997, he was arrested for aggravated sexual assault of a minor female in Tyler. The Diocese of Tyler cooperated with the arrest and investigation. Mr. Cuello was immediately removed from priestly ministry. While out of jail on bond, he fled to Ecuador. In 2003, he was captured with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and extradited to the U.S. for trial. Mr. Cuello plead guilty and was sentenced to life in prison. This case was widely covered by the media at the time, and throughout the process the Church cooperated fully with officials.

Following the trial, the Diocese of Tyler submitted the case to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI removed Mr. Cuello from the priesthood.

The acts of abuse he committed were deplorable, and it is fitting and just that he received the maximum criminal penalty from the courts - life in prison - as well as the most severe canonical penalty the Church can impose - dismissal from the clerical state.

Mr. Cuello represents less than one-percent of the 448 priests and deacons who have served in the Diocese of Tyler since its creation by Pope St. John Paul II in 1987.

While the Cuello case is the only one which took place in the Diocese of Tyler, I share with you that the Archdiocese of San Antonio has included the name of Msgr. John Flynn in their release today. The summary of the case can be found on the web site of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

Msgr. Flynn is a native of Ireland. He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of San Antonio in 1952. Msgr. Flynn resigned from ministry in the Archdiocese in 1997 and came to Tyler in 1998 with the permission of Bishop Edmond Carmody. He retired as a pastor in 2002 but continued to provide priestly service.

In 2005, the Archdiocese of San Antonio presented new information about Msgr. Flynn to Bishop Alvaro Corrada of Tyler which indicated a possible credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor female which was reported to have occurred in the 1960s/70s in the San Antonio area.

The Diocese of Tyler immediately removed Msgr. Flynn from priestly ministry and the case was submitted by the Diocese of Tyler to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome as required by Church law. In this case, the Congregation did not dispense from prescription (a canonical term barring the case from prosecution because of the passage of time) and returned the case to Bishop Corrada, instructing him to take the precautions he thought were appropriate. With some restrictions, Bishop Corrada restored priestly faculties to Msgr. Flynn in 2008.

In early 2018, Bishop Joseph E. Strickland ordered a thorough review of these matters. No new information came forward, but in light of the seriousness of the matter, Bishop Strickland removed Msgr. Flynn from priestly ministry.

Sadly, on Jan. 30, I was informed that the Diocese of Dallas will be including the name of Rev. Michael Barone, a retired priest of the Diocese of Tyler who is not currently in active ministry and does not reside in the Diocese of Tyler, on their list of those credibly accused. Father Barone was ordained for the Diocese of Dallas in 1975 and served there before becoming a priest of the Diocese of Tyler in 1987. The Diocese of Tyler is surprised at his inclusion because we are unaware of any credible allegations of abuse of a minor. Once additional information is received from the Diocese of Dallas, I will be presenting this case to our Review Board, in accord with our policies. Additionally, based on the determination of the Diocese of Dallas and in accord with Church law, Father Barone has been placed on administrative leave.

As I have said before, we have all been deeply hurt and saddened by the scandals in the Church. Please know that the Diocese of Tyler will do everything possible to prevent abuse of any kind. As your bishop, I am personally committed to this and I will support our priests and

deacons as we seek to joyfully live out our ministry in Jesus Christ. I will also ensure that we are held to the standards of Christian virtues proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

May God, who is all-loving and all-merciful, watch over his Church and protect all of his people, especially the children and the vulnerable – the “little ones” for whom Christ the Lord has a special love.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized cross-like symbol followed by a series of loops and flourishes.